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Official Business



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THE RONNIE SHOWS REPORT

SPECIAL UPDATE ON HEALTH CARE

- **Protecting Social Security and Medicare**
- **Health Care at Rural Hospitals & Nursing Homes**
 - **Patients' Bill of Rights for HMO Care**
 - **Military Retirees' Health Care**
 - **Veterans Health Benefits**
- **Affordable Prescription Drugs for Seniors**

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Friends:

Last August I was fortunate to visit with hundreds of our neighbors during my "*For the People Community Tour*" which made 18 stops from Laurel to Natchez, from Jackson to McComb, and just about everywhere in between.

I heard about a lot of things from a lot of people, but the question that kept coming up was: "*What is happening to our health care?*" This newsletter addresses the state of health care in our community, and proposals I am working on to protect essential health services. These measures include:

- *Establishing a Social Security "Lock Box" to protect Social Security funds;*
- *Reducing the federal deficit to make sure Medicare is secure for senior citizens;*
- *Restoring Medicare payments to rural hospitals and nursing homes to ensure adequate health care;*
- *Ensuring that seniors on Medicare can get cheaper prescription drugs without driving up costs for others;*
- *Restoring health care benefits promised to veterans and military retirees when they agreed to serve their country on the front lines; and*
- *Passing a "Patients' Bill of Rights" to ensure fair and appropriate treatment from HMOs.*

I was glad to meet so many people during the "*For the People Community Tour.*" But the talk does not stop there. Addresses, telephone numbers, web site and e-mail information are included elsewhere in this newsletter and you are invited to use them whenever I may be of service.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Shows

RONNIE SHOWS
Member of Congress

RONNIE SHOWS: "HEALTH CARE MUST WORK BETTER FOR WORKING FAMILIES, SENIORS & VETERANS!"

Protecting Social Security & Medicare

There has been lots of talk about "protecting Social Security and Medicare." *The best way we can protect Social Security and Medicare is to eliminate our huge federal deficit.*

I opposed the federal budgets proposed by the President and by the Democrat and Republican Congressional leaders because they would raid Social Security and not reduce the deficit. *I supported a fiscally conservative budget that was dedicated to setting Social Security aside for Social Security, and to reducing the federal deficit to ensure the long-term survival of Medicare.*

Hands Off Social Security!

Earlier this year Congress passed, but the President vetoed, an across-the-board \$800 billion dollar tax cut. *I opposed this "pie in the sky" tax cut because it would have drained the Social Security Trust Fund and failed to reduce the \$6 trillion dollar national debt, causing all Americans to pay higher interest rates and higher prices for everything, every day, for years to come. And it would have cut Medicare when Medicare already is shrinking.*

I support *responsible* tax cuts that help working families and businesses – such as estate tax cuts, business tax incentives and incentives that help families afford higher education. *But we must pay off our huge national debt as soon as we can, and make sure Social Security and Medicare are secure.*

THE SOCIAL SECURITY 'LOCK BOX'

I was one of just a handful of Congressmen to cosponsor the Social Security Lock Box bill and move it to passage. Anyone who is concerned about Social Security, and who wants to make sure that Social Security dollars are not spent on anything else, should contact our Senators and share their concern!

We need to do the right thing. We can cut taxes, but we must also make sure our bills are paid and our elderly folks are taken care of. That is what any responsible family would do.

Restoring Medicare Cuts to Hospitals

Congress recently restored cuts in Medicare payments to hospitals and other health care providers that had been included in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. *By keeping our rural hospitals open and operating, this legislation is a boon to all area residents, not just those on Medicare.*

The 1997 cuts were intended to make health care expenditures more efficient, but instead forced providers to severely reduce their services and deny treatment to people in need of care. *These cuts were devastating to seniors and the disabled who have few health care options in rural areas in our state. Many rural hospitals and nursing homes, unable to provide adequate care without sufficient Medicare support, faced the possibility of shutting down.*

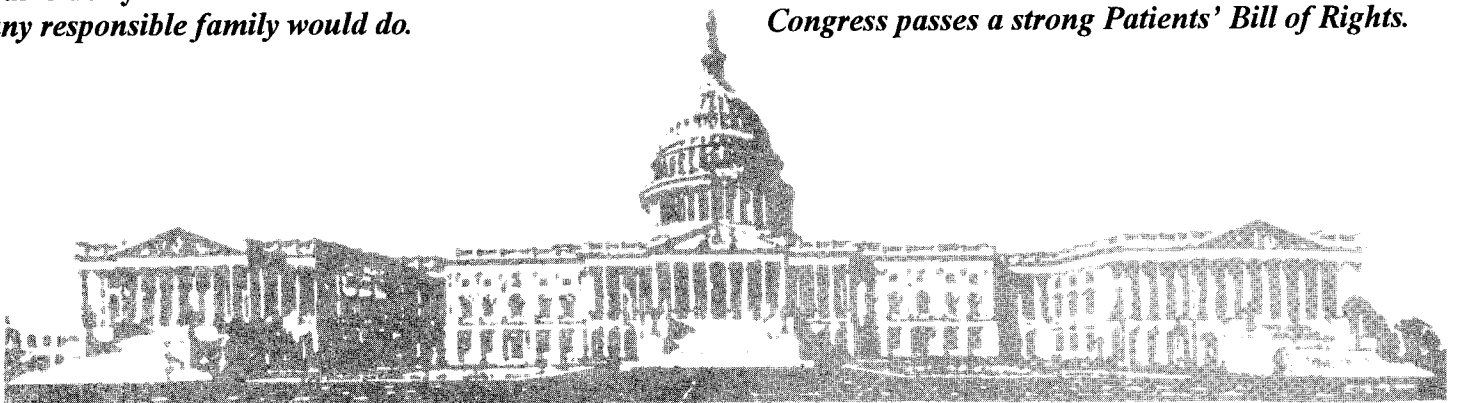
The bill approved by Congress provides additional Medicare funds to hospitals, nursing and home health care agencies, managed care plans and other care providers. It would eliminate a 5.7% cut for hospital outpatient centers, delay a 15% cut to home health agencies, increase payment rates for skilled-nursing facilities, and lift caps on outpatient rehab therapy.

'Patients' Bill of Rights' for HMO Care

Earlier this year, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved The Patients' Bill of Rights, which would protect the 161 million individuals who receive medical insurance through health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and similar managed-care plans.

This Bill of Rights allows patients to sue insurance companies for damages resulting from denial of care or maltreatment. It would also guarantee emergency room coverage without prior approval, assure prompt access to specialists including pediatricians and obstetricians, and provide access to clinical trials.

This is an important step to provide Americans greater access to essential health care. A Senate bill covers far fewer Americans and does little to make health insurance more accessible for families or businesses. *I will work hard to see that the Congress passes a strong Patients' Bill of Rights.*



RONNIE SHOWS: “KEEP OUR PROMISE TO AMERICA’S MILITARY HEROES!”

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2966

To restore health care coverage to retired members of the uniformed services.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 28, 1999

Mr. SHOWS (for himself and Mr. NORWOOD) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To restore health care coverage to retired members of the uniformed services.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**
4 This Act may be cited as the “Keep Our Promise to
5 America’s Military Retirees Act”.

HR 2966: Shows’ Bill Will Restore the Promise of Military Health Care

Many people joined the military believing they and their dependents would earn lifetime medical care after a career of service. *The sad truth for many retired career soldiers is that the health care they earned just wasn't there. In fact, many military retirees receive less health care than people who never served in the military.*

The United States has a moral obligation to honor those who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice. I have introduced H.R. 2966, *The Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act*, the ‘broken promise’ bill that America's military retirees have wanted for years. This bill allows all military retirees to participate in the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), CHAMPUS after they turn 65, or remain in Tricare.

This bill lets America's military retirees know that we honor them and will keep our word to them. And this will let the next generation of Americans know they must not be discouraged from military service. They must know that the American people value the sacrifice they would make to defend our country.

Improvements in Veterans Health Care

We must support our men and women in uniform if we want dedicated individuals to provide the skills and know-how to defend our great nation. *Congress has passed the Veterans Millennium Health Care Act, which enables the Department of Veterans Affairs to expand long-term healthcare, including nursing home care, for veterans with service-connected disability ratings of 70 percent or higher.* It also reimburses uninsured veterans for emergency care received at non-VA facilities.

Congress also passed the Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act. This gives a 2.4 percent Cost of Living Adjustment to veterans receiving disability compensation or a dependency and indemnity compensation, and gives dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses of former POWs.

It also restores eligibility for CHAMP-VA medical care, education benefits, and home loan assistance to remarried surviving spouses who lost eligibility for those benefits upon remarriage and whose subsequent marriage has ended. H.R. 2280 also establishes national cemeteries and funds Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs.

RONNIE SHOWS: "SENIORS ON MEDICARE NEED AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS!"

Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors

The high cost of prescription drugs prevents many needy seniors from getting appropriate treatment. Many must choose between buying food or medicine.

I am cosponsor of H.R. 664, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act, which would substantially lower the costs that seniors pay for prescription drugs. H.R. 664 would allow seniors to buy drugs at the same discount as the government and HMOs.

This is different from the President's plan to include prescription drug coverage in Medicare. *H.R. 664 does not include drug coverage as a Medicare benefit so there is no added premium. H.R. 664 makes prescription drugs more affordable for Medicare-eligible seniors, but it does not increase the cost of Medicare or the cost of drugs for others.*

The Shows' 'Discharge Petition'

It is distressing that not one House Republican cosponsors H.R. 664 and the Republican leadership refuses to allow Congress to even debate it.

I have taken the lead to force the Leadership to bring H.R. 664 to a vote. My bill, H.Res. 371, will initiate a "discharge petition". H.R. 664 would automatically be brought to a vote if the petition gets 218 signatures – a majority of the House. It is widely believed that public pressure will result in 218 signatures.

It is a shame that we must resort to this complex parliamentary strategy, but we need H.R. 664 to help reduce the cost of drugs for the seniors who need them the most. Our seniors, who have worked hard and payed taxes, deserve the peace of mind to know they will have the medicine they need.

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 371

Providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 664) to provide for substantial reductions in the price of prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 9, 1999

Mr. SHOWS submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Rules

RESOLUTION

Providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 664) to provide for substantial reductions in the price of prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries.

CALL RONNIE SHOWS IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE

I provide a variety of services for the people of our area, and can try to resolve problems you may have with Social Security, Medicare, VA, or other agencies. Please call, write or visit to get more information!

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